Encyclopaedia Aristasiana

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Introduction to Aristasian Geography

If people make one mistake more important than any other about Aristasia, it is that they underestimate its sheer size. I am not certain why. Perhaps it is because they have seen dinky maps with cute pictures. Perhaps it is the possibly-misleading use of the term "provinces" for the Nations.

The Nations are Provinces, but only in the sense that Britain was once a province of Rome - and not even as much as that sense, for they are not really centrally governed. Very few decisions taken at Ladyton would actually affect Quirinelle, for example.

Culverians may see the Aristasian provinces as being somewhat equivalent to States. Again, that is misleading. The equivalent of an American State in Aristasia would probably be a Duchy. The Duchy is the major administrative unit within a nation. Some are quite small, containing only a few Counties, while others are huge. The Archduchy of Jenilow, for example, while being under the Arkadyani Crown, is in many respects like a nation in its own right. Crossing the boundary from Trerayin Duchy in North-West Arkadya into Northern Jenilow is almost as much of a change as crossing the border between Dachertha Duchy, east Novaria, into Jenilow.

Probably another reason why people picture Aristasia much smaller than it is, is that even now relatively little is known about it beyond the broad outline of the nations. The fact is that that even the smaller nations are each probably as large and various as the casual observer believes the whole of Aristasia to be. Each Duchy has its own ways and customs, often its own characteristic dialect, its major cities and small towns, its farmlands and great country houses, its history and institutions.

I have mentioned Jenilow partly because it is probably the only Duchy that has become well known in its own right among Aristasians-in-Telluria. Jenilow, admittedly, is somewhat exceptional. It is one of the largest Duchies and the fact that it is not a nation in its own right is really more a historical accident than a reflection of its nature. Still many

of the larger Duchies in other nations are not far off Jenilow in size and importance.

All things come in their season, and the time has probably not come yet to be thinking about a full description of any nation at Duchy level, but the time has come, in this pette's opinion, to move beyond the sketchy caricature-view that sees the Motherlands as a smallish place divided into a few lightly differentiated "provinces".

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